

BRAIN AND MEMORY: A PILOT STUDY ON THE EXPERIENCE OF REBIRTH AND THE PRESENT LIFE QUALITY OF ADULT SUBJECTS

MARINELLA COCO¹, TIZIANA RAMACI², ELISABETTA SAGONE³, MILENA GALATI SARDO⁴, PAOLA BRACHINA⁴, BARBARA BUSCEMI¹, , LUCIO SALVATORE GIOVANNI COCO⁴, GIACOMO PAPOTTO⁴, GIULIO MARIA FEDERICO PAPOTTO⁴, GIULIA DI GREGORIO⁴, MARIA CRISTINA PETRALIA⁵, , ANDREA BUSCEMI¹, VALENTINA PERCIAVALLE³

¹Horus Cooperative Social, Ragusa - ²University Kore, Enna - ³Department of Educational Sciences, University of Catania - ⁴University of Catania - ⁵Department of Biomedical and Biotechnological Sciences, University of Catania

ABSTRACT

It is commonly thought that you cannot remember anything about one's birth, what happened inside the maternal womb and on childbirth. Experimental investigations have, however, highlighted the existence of a fetal memory, as the fetus would seem to be able to memorize and learn prematurely. However, these are unconscious memories, which are not easily retrievable and expressible.

The purpose of this study was to verify whether and how pregnancy and birth patterns affect the lifestyle of an adult subject.

50 volunteer students of the Degree Course in Psychological Sciences and Techniques of the University of Catania took part in the research. The sample was subjected to the regression technique, and then a nine-question questionnaire was given out to be filled in anonymously. Only 15 out of 50 subjects returned it completed.

The results obtained have shown how the experience of rebirth influences the quality of present life.

One observes how the experience of regression is significantly correlated with the perception of one's self and how subjects can retrieve memories of unconscious feelings that experience has led them to live, which may partly account for one's personality.

Keywords: *memory, rebirth, pregnancy, adults, lifestyle.*

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Introduction

In recent years, thanks to the development of sophisticated prenatal diagnosis equipment capable of monitoring the behavior and movements of the fetus, it has been possible to observe how it can react to stimuli not only from inside the uterus but also from the outside of it⁽¹⁾. The development of perceptual abilities in the prenatal period has led to hypothesize that the fetus is able to learn and memorize stimuli, and this would happen because the fetus is thought to be able to show early abilities to perceive, taste, smell, feel, see and move⁽²⁾ (Chamberlain, 1998).

The Protomentale Theory⁽³⁾ (Imbasciati, 1998) states that the first fetal-fetal experiences would condition the subsequent psychic development, so significantly that a sort of continuity between fetal life and neonatal life could be found out.

Pre and post-natal psychology is a research field that has only recently attracted scholars and researchers.

It is commonly thought that you cannot remember anything about one's birth, what happened inside the intrauterine environment and on childbirth. Experimental investigations have, however, highlighted the existence of a fetal memory, as the fetus would seem to be able to memorize and

learn prematurely. However, these are unconscious memories, which are not easily retrievable and expressible. Such memories may also be associated with traumatic experiences at the time of delivery and may sometimes result in psychopathological developments⁽⁴⁻⁵⁾. Accessing such memories offers the ability to process early experiences, and this can be a useful tool for treating patients within a psychotherapeutic context⁽⁶⁻⁷⁾.

It has also been shown that within our brain, the structure responsible for the formation of unconscious memories related to early traumatic experiences is the amygdala, a set of interconnected, almond-shaped nuclei, located between the nuclei of the cerebral hemisphere base, above the cerebral trunk⁽⁸⁻¹⁰⁾. The amygdala matures before birth, already in the eighth month of life. Already during fetal life, it then starts to store experiences. At that time, however, the cortex is not yet ripe while the hippocampus develops afterwards and continues to grow in adult subjects. The hippocampus plays a pivotal role in storing and contextualizing experiences⁽¹¹⁻¹³⁾.

The purpose of this research work was to verify whether and how pregnancy and birth patterns affect the lifestyle of an adult subject.

Materials and methods

50 volunteer students of the Course in Psychological Sciences and Techniques of the University of Catania took part in the research. The sample was subjected to the regression technique, and then a nine-question questionnaire was given out to be filled in anonymously. Only 15 out of 50 subjects returned it completed.

Instrument

Questionnaire items (Table 1) were formulated in order to elicit emotions and information experienced during participation in regression technique and find out how prenatal life influenced the life of subjects.

The Regression Technique

The technique used is called "Funnel Technique" designed by Franco del Casale.

The sessions were conducted by an experienced psychotherapist, Prof. Pietro Petriglieri, who suddenly passed away.

| | |
|-----|---|
| Q.1 | 2) Tell your experience freely and spontaneously: how did you see yourself in the maternal uterus and which were your feelings as the months passed, describe the time of birth, and what did you have to do to "Come into the world". Also talk about any difficulties you have encountered during the nine-month pregnancy and on childbirth and how you have lived and faced them. |
| Q.2 | Who was there to welcome you at the time of your birth? And what did he / she just say when they saw you? |
| Q.3 | Is there an episode (you have lived in a positive / negative way) or a particular situation that hit you during the experience? (If so, report it). |
| Q.4 | Based on what you know about your birth, regardless of your parents' stories, do you know if you were born naturally or by a Caesarean section? If you were a Caesarean section baby, do you know if it was scheduled or decided at the last minute? |
| Q.5 | Were you born "at termination, in advance or with a few days of delay"? |
| Q.6 | What do you know about your mother's pregnancy? Did you experience pregnancy in a serene and problem-free way, or did she face difficulties from a physical and / or emotional point of view? Have there been any adverse events or traumas during pregnancy? |
| Q.7 | How did your birth and the way you were born affect your current lifestyle? |
| Q.8 | How is your present life? |
| Q.9 | Is there anything you would like to change? (If so, what?) |

Table 1: Questionnaire given after Regression Technique.

Results

The results obtained were interpreted according to Franco Del Casale's school of thought (anno).

Analyzing the answers, questions 1 and 9 showed how the experience of rebirth influences the present life quality.

One observes how the experience of regression is significantly correlated with the perception of one's self and how subjects can retrieve unconscious memories that experience has led them to live, which may partly explain one's personality.

Table 2 shows the most significant parts of the two responses.

Conclusion

The results obtained show how the fetus's experience is highly significant during pregnancy for the personality of the adult individual.

The experience of birth (using rebirth technique) shows that, on the one hand, it is possible to relieve the emotions experienced during pregnancy but, on the other, these sensations may influence the quality of present life of adult subjects.

The outcome obtained does not want to blame or shame anyone, nor does it seek for a culprit in parents; however, it can be used to hypothesize that unintentional influences experienced during preg-

| SUBJECTS | Q. no. 1 | QUESTION Q. no. 9 |
|----------|---|--|
| N.1 | A feeling of numbness throughout the body and the inability to get out of the funnel. | Waiting for changes although without being impatient. |
| N.2 | I had the feeling of slipping. | I would love to have more serenity. |
| N.3 | Within the maternal uterus the feelings were very negative. | I would like to be more motivated, positive, passionate, and feel useful in something important in my life. |
| N.4 | I felt like smiling, I felt serene in general. | I'm happy with what I have. |
| N.5 | Feeling of comfort and tranquility. Around the eighth month I felt like I was getting bigger and that the place I was in was shrinking, giving me the feeling that air was missing. | I would not change anything, but I would like to have something more and in a way accomplish it. |
| N.6 | Initially I felt cold, then I set myself up. I spent all the time gesturing in serenity and fetal position by turning on myself. Once the day of came, the cap came off by itself and I got out of the funnel as if I was going down a slide. | I would like to change relationships with my family and have clear plans for the future. |
| N.7 | The prevalent feeling was serenity, I felt immediately in a cosy and comfortable place. | I live well with myself to handle my problems and I have so many people who love to help me in my moments of fear. |
| N.8 | I was quiet and blessed in that lukewarm, comfortable water. I was fine until the eighth, ninth months when the funnel seemed to get too tight. At the time of delivery the neck of the funnel seemed too tight but I pushed myself out into the world. | I would have liked to belong to a richer family. But we have always been "modest" and I love my parents. |
| N.9 | I found it difficult to enter the funnel, but once inside I felt at home and I did not want to leave that place. I felt anxious and afraid of what was happening and unable to get out of the tube so, I decided to go up and get out from above. | Beautiful despite the daily difficulties. |
| N.10 | In the first three months as if in a whirlwind. After this initial feeling, however, my feelings were of well-being, when the funnel cap came off I went out with ease, although with my feet as if I was slipping down. | One thing I would like to change is my way of handling privacy. I would like to be more extrovert, more open without difficulties that lead to problems in everyday life. I often get misunderstood in my attitudes. |
| N.11 | I have not been able to shrink, I have remained the same size today. I imagined a cold, tin funnel. I felt a slight pressure on my shoulders when I was leaving the uterus. | Despite my conditions, my pleasant and serene conditions, I often feel dissatisfied and feel that my life is passing too quickly. |
| N.12 | During the nine months of pregnancy, everything was quiet, I was floating and moved inside the funnel without experiencing any discomfort. At birth, the cap splashed off at great speed without any notice but, despite that, I could not get out, so I made a big effort and tried to get out using my hands. | Beautiful as well as difficult moments, with so many obstacles to overcome. Even though I tend to overwhelm myself with discomfort, then I always find the strength to react. |
| N.13 | During the nine months I was quiet but in the final ones I felt tight in the bottom. At the time of birth I jumped out of the top of the funnel. | In general, everything is fine, but I would like to change some aspects of my person and life. |
| N.14 | I threw myself into the water, which was a bit warmer than I would have liked it. At the very moment of birth, the walls were shaking and on that occasion I felt a bit of a nuisance, the cap was removed and the water went away very quickly. | I would like to live it more intensely, and be more motivated in everything I do. |
| N.15 | In the maternal uterus I saw myself kneeling, immersed in that sweet liquid. I was happy, in prayer, waiting. | Before I could not even imagine, everyday something changes inside me, but above all, I know that in myself there is now a strong being that is growing more and more. I would change nothing of my life because everything has led me to be what I am now for a certain reason and also allowed me to stay close and give love to those I am next to. I live every day according to what the passage says: "All things cooperate for good for those who love God, who are called according to his proposal" (Romans 8:28) |

Table 2: Answer samples to questions Q1 and Q9.

nancy by parents may affect the personality of the unborn child⁽¹⁵⁻¹⁷⁾.

In this regard, it may be supposed that our genes can be influenced during the nine months of pregnancy by intrauterine experience⁽¹⁸⁾.

So, a question spontaneously arises: if the pregnancy has not been positive, is everything lost or can something be done?

The answer is ready: one can exploit a program called, "Straighten the Tower", a regression technique that will revive pregnancy as you would like it to have been, coined by Professors Del Casale and Petriglieri.

Why did they call this technique "Straighten the Tower"?

Simple! You can compare our lifestyle to the

Tower of Pisa. The tower is known for its slope, caused by a structural problem at its foundations.

If, as it is hypothesized, pregnancy is the basis on which each individual builds his/her "script", it represents an essential "ground" for a better quality of adult life. Our project is ambitious: to use the "funnel technique" for diagnostic purposes, aware that if for any reason the basis on which the "script" was written were inclined, it is necessary to be able to intervene with psychotherapy in order to "straighten our tower".

Thanks to this pilot study, we observed how the mother-child attachment¹⁹⁻²³ can significantly affect the child's future life as an adult and how, beyond what is often assumed, what happens outside the "oven" is not meaningless to the fetus.

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Corresponding author
MARINELLA COCO
marinella.coco@gmail.com
Ragusa
(Italy)